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ABSTRACT

This booklet provides technical assistance for those interested in the collaboration process for early childhood programs and is based on the experiences of Collaborative Partnerships in Florida. Section 1 of the document describes the collaborative grant process in Florida with the goal of improving early childhood services and outlines eight key components of collaboration: (1) formalized partnership agreements; (2) collaborative staff development; (3) simplified system of entry; (4) outreach initiatives to increase family access to comprehensive services; (5) sharing of funding sources; (6) effective transitions; (7) inclusion of children with disabilities; and (8) use of validated information to enhance quality. Part 2 of the booklet presents a rationale for the collaboration process and discusses benefits and difficulties of collaboration. Part 3 examines the five factors critical to program success: the interagency council role, the partnership coordinator, quality, transition, and streamlined system of entry. Part 4 identifies lessons noted over the 6 years the collaboration grants have been in place. Areas of concern that interfere with the project coordinator's effective functioning relate to turf, time, and training. Transition issues relate to documentation and tracking, and bureaucracy and turf. Challenges presented by quality relate to monitoring and training. Impediments to producing an effective simplified system of entry include turf and bureaucratic issues. Concerns related to evaluation of the collaboration grant process center around planning and methods. Part 5 of the booklet asserts that collaboration has proved to be an effective tool for change and has improved resources for children and families in Florida. (Contains 10 references and suggested readings.) (KB)

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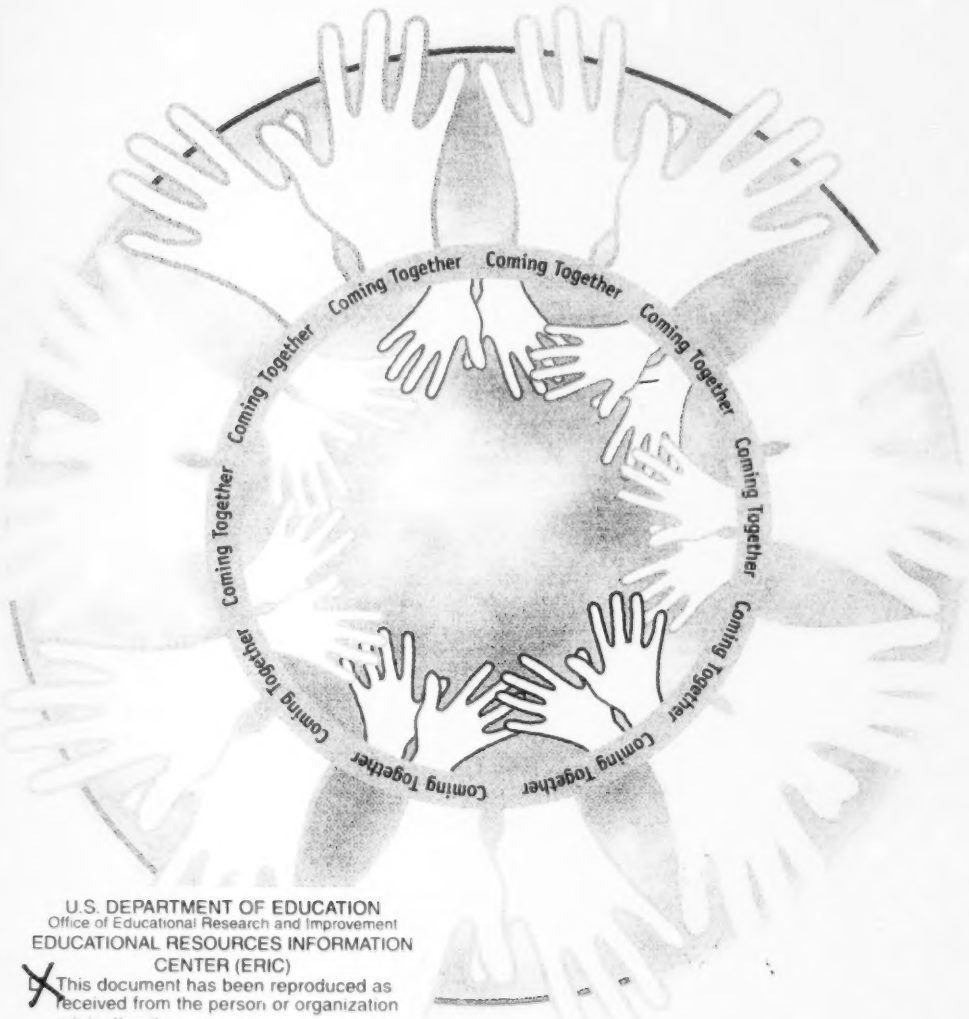
Coming Together

Collaboration as a Tool for Change



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SERVE

Improving Learning through Research & Development

Coming Together

Collaboration as a Tool for Change

By

The Regional Educational Laboratory at SERVE
Associated with the School of Education
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

and

The Florida Department of Education
Office of Early Intervention and School Readiness

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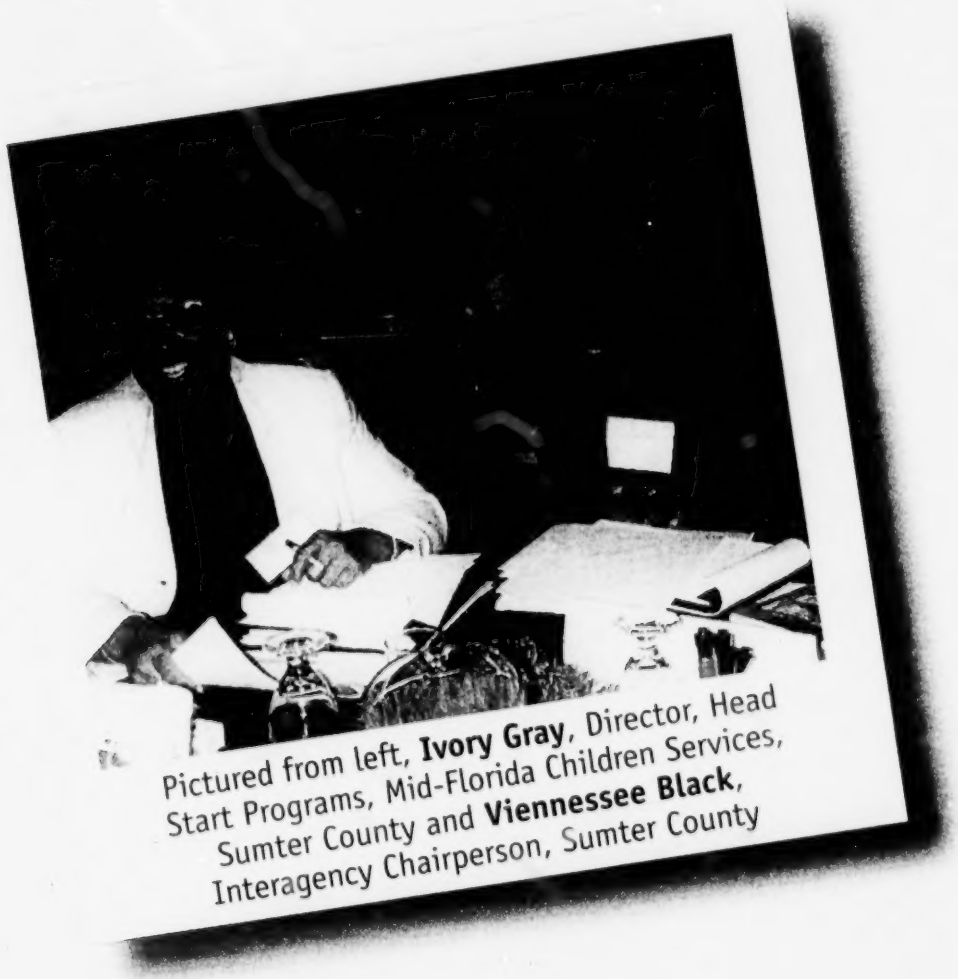
Preface

This document is intended to be a technical assistance document for those interested in the collaboration process. It is based on the experiences of Collaborative Partnerships in Florida. This paper is not a review of the literature, although considerable research exists on the topic. For those interested in a more extensive overview of the existing information on collaboration, a list of suggested readings appears on page 24.



Pictured from left, **Ivory Gray**, Director, Head Start Programs, Mid-Florida Children Services, Sumter County and **Viennessee Black**, Interagency Chairperson, Sumter County

History

The Collaborative Grant process began in Florida in 1993 when the Florida Department of Education initiated the Collaborative Partnership Grants program. The intent of this program was to bring communities together in their efforts to implement Goal 1 and to improve Early Childhood services. Although the collaborative partnership grants have existed for a relatively short time, they have had an enormous impact and now exist in all 67 Florida counties. With the implementation of welfare reform legislation, the collaborative grant process has become a cutting-edge process as the welfare reform act, CS/SB 1662 (Work and Gain Economic Self-Sufficiency, WAGES) includes components which are addressed by the collaboration grants.

This document is intended to help those new to the collaborative process to better understand collaboration and take advantage of the successes of others, as well as the lessons learned through their hard work and dedication. It also addresses those interested in the collaboration process whether they be observers, researchers, supporters, implementers, or others involved in the process. *Coming Together: Collaboration as a Tool for Change* is intended to serve as a resource and a tool to further the collaboration process.

Collaboration Grants currently address the eight required components outlined here:

1. Formalized partnership agreements

Formal written partnership agreements, as opposed to other informal working arrangements, help to provide those involved with a clear picture of their expected contribution to the collaboration process. Through written partnership agreements, roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated. This is evidenced by sign-offs by agency heads. Such an agreement provides structure, stability, and commitment to the ongoing work of collaborating.

2. Collaborative staff development

When collaborative staff development exists, all partners in the collaborative effort join to co-sponsor and participate in shared training. Collaborative staff development enhances common skills and knowledge across programs resulting in increased levels of understanding and trust. Partners experience an increased willingness to share resources and expertise and a decreased level of "turf guarding." Families can be provided with the most effective service available to meet their needs.

3. Simplified system of entry

A simplified system of entry is evidenced by a system for data collection and dissemination which is common to all collaborative partners. When such a system is in place, communication among programs is enhanced by the increase in shared information available to service providers through common forms, technology, and other processes or practices. Families are able to better access needed resources. These positive changes result in increased efficiency of service provision and use of resources.

4. Outreach initiatives to increase family access to comprehensive services

Successful outreach is crucial to successful collaboration. Accomplished through means such as newsletters, open houses, orientation meetings, and community wide activities, outreach programs increase community awareness, buy-in, and participation in programs and services. Outreach must be addressed if the collaboration effort is to reach its potential.

5. Sharing of funding sources

Probably the most difficult task to accomplish, shared funding is evidenced by such markers as a co-funded grant coordinator and a shared resource center staffed and stocked jointly by all participants. Appropriate pooling of funding allows increased service levels for families. Together, agencies can provide services they could not provide alone.

6. Effective transitions

Transitions refer to movement between or among environments, agencies, or institutions. They also occur as children move from home to school. Smooth transitions allow service agencies or child care and education providers to provide continuity of services for children and families. Smooth transitions exist when children and families do not experience gaps in service; there may not even be an awareness of who provides their service.

7. Inclusion of children with disabilities

PL 105-17 bans the exclusion of children with disabilities from publicly funded programs; the collaboration grant requires that the needs of children with disabilities be addressed. Inclusion is evidenced by specific planning and provision for the needs of children with disabilities. The inclusion of children with disabilities in "typical" settings results not only in appropriate service for disabled children but also in higher-quality service for all children.

8. Use of validated information to enhance quality

The use of validated information to enhance quality is reflected by increases in quality indicators such as National Association for the Education of

Young Children (NAEYC) accredited programs and Child Development Associate (CDA) certified staff. Validated information provides a valuable resource for enhancing quality. Collaborative partners can plan partnership activities to focus on efforts which will lead to increased program quality, such as self-studies, mentoring, and documentation of best practices. These efforts directly influence quality of services for children and families.

Appropriate concentration on these eight areas enables collaborative partners to increase efficiency of service and reduce waste. Efficient use of resources is increasingly important as budgets shrink and programs disappear. The collaboration process aims to streamline services and provide the highest level of services with the least expenditure of resources.

1
Formalized partnership agreements

2
Collaborative staff development

3
Simplified system of entry

4
Outreach initiatives to increase family access to comprehensive services

5
Sharing of funding sources

6
Effective transitions

7
Inclusion of children with disabilities

8
Use of validated information to enhance quality

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Rationale

Coming Together further addresses, in depth, three of the key components of collaboration grants: quality, transition, and streamlined system of entry. In addition, it addresses the roles of the grant coordinator and the Interagency Council and the importance of evaluation and monitoring of the collaboration process. These topics are identified repeatedly as issues of concern to those most closely involved in the collaboration process. Additionally, as more systems look at this process, this document addresses the need for collaboration as an answer to pressing questions of economics and expertise. Currently, many systems co-exist to meet the needs of children. Current economic reality no longer allows service providers the luxury of multiple approaches to a single problem. Instead, solutions must address multiple problems efficiently. Collaboration offers a means for focused efforts to address needs. Considerable research-based information is available to assist groups in collaborating. The existing information identifies several avenues for joint undertakings, beginning with **cooperation**, where participants assist each other but retain complete autonomy; including **coordination**, where participants have a limited arrangement to share resources for a specific program or goal; and culminating with **collaboration**, where participants share resources and leadership to accomplish common goals on an ongoing basis. Collaboration is the ultimate objective of joint efforts.

Experience, verified by research contained in documents such as *Interagency Collaboration: Improving the Delivery of Services to Children and Families* (Kadel, 1993) and *Together We Can* (Melaville, Blank, & Asayesh, 1993), indicates that successful collaboration includes elements such as

- Equal representation from many agencies
- Reciprocity between agencies
- Sharing of resources and services
- Clear identification of players and roles
- Shared goal setting

Successful collaboration requires

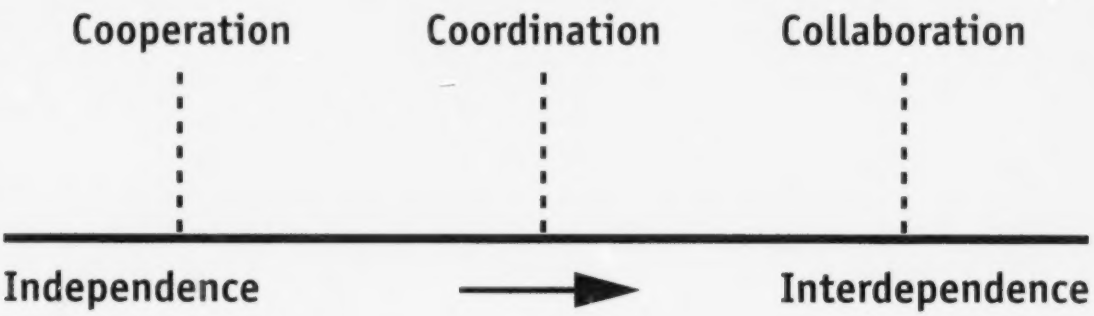
- Ongoing, open communication between those involved
- Regular feedback from all involved, including those served
- Evaluation and monitoring
- Follow-up
- Risk-taking

And, collaboration results in

- Elimination of duplicated services
- Conservation of resources
- Elimination of territorial barriers
- Mutual interaction and interdependency

True collaborative systems share many characteristics. Collaborative systems are family-driven. Comprehensive, family friendly, and accessible, collaborative systems take into account the needs and strengths of families in the community. They offer the means for seamless delivery of services, may provide services at non-traditional hours, and offer a clear access system with practical accessibility. Cultural diversity, community values, and the needs and strengths of families are addressed as programs are planned. Collaboration focuses on identifying and meeting the needs of the community served.

Unfortunately, true collaboration is difficult. Power struggles, turf issues, and time constraints often interfere with collaborative efforts. Funding issues and bureaucracy may place barriers in the way of collaboration. Service providers often feel overloaded, underpaid, and underappreciated, and face isolation, insularity, and inertia as they consider changes in current systems. Lack of a common goal and vision may hamper efforts at collaboration. Agencies often find it easier to give up and fall back on their old way of work—cooperation and coordination—than to collaborate.



But there is light at the end of the tunnel. Many counties in Florida have begun to surmount these difficulties through the collaboration grant process and come together in partnership to begin to provide a seamless system for families in the state. *Coming Together* shares how this process is evolving by addressing some of the issues involved in building a collaborative partnership from the viewpoint of those who have done it.

The Collaboration Grant

Although all eight components must be included as the collaboration grant is written, partnerships identify these five factors as being among the most critical to program success.

Role of the Interagency Councils

"Collaboration is relationship-based" (Walton County, Florida, 1998).

The Interagency Council is made up of representatives from community service agencies and exists to identify and address the needs of children and families. Individual communities administer their own councils. Decisions such as how often the Council will meet and who will provide leadership are based on the needs of the community served. Because it includes representatives from many agencies, the Interagency Council can be a leader in the collaborative process. As a model for community agencies, the council may provide leadership to meet the challenges, such as turf-guarding and lack of communication, which sometimes diminish the success of the collaboration effort. Experience demonstrates that a high degree of collaborative behavior within the Interagency Council, evidenced by effective communication and shared leadership, helps to ensure successful collaboration. Through information-sharing and cross-training, the Interagency Council can increase understanding which leads to communication and shared leadership.

The Interagency Council may serve many purposes within the collaboration effort. It can set high standards, serve as a resource to agencies, and provide a forum for community efforts to increase awareness and understanding of quality. It can plan for quality issues affecting the Early Childhood community, such as training and accreditation. The Interagency Council can also seek opportunities to provide recognition to collaborative partners for a job well-done and encouragement for continuing efforts.

Successful collaboration results in one group serving the needs of families in one community. In a successful collaboration effort, the Interagency Council provides the vision and impetus for partner agencies to overcome existing barriers and form one family-driven, high-quality network of services within their community. The Interagency Council provides a setting for collaborative partners and the community to come together with a common goal.

Partnership Coordinator

"(A partnership) coordinator is instrumental in breaking down territorial barriers" (Pasco County, Florida, 1998).

The partnership in Hendry and Glades Counties used their grant coordinator as a resource to bring the "personal touch" to their providers, resulting in extensive interest in the accreditation process among private providers. Based on education efforts, private providers have formed a voluntary support group to support each other in the accreditation process.

A partnership coordinator is the person who manages the day-to-day functioning of the collaborative effort. In this capacity, roles may include bookkeeper, public speaker, community liaison, fund raiser, and resource developer. Ideally, the partnership coordinator provides a focus, facilitates communication, and serves as a conduit for information. In other circumstances, the coordinator may have no defined role at all or may serve in the role of only a facilitator.

Coordinators have been drawn from various sources. Often, the coordinator is a member of the Interagency Council who either volunteers or is selected by the other members to serve for a definite period of time. Some councils have chosen to hire a consultant from outside the process. Either option offers advantages and disadvantages. Coordinators who are drawn from inside the process may have a better overall picture of the effort and strong existing relationships within the community. However, these coordinators often struggle with other responsibilities which limit the time available for the collaboration effort and may also lack an unbiased perspective. A hired consultant as coordinator offers an impartial perspective, organizational skills sufficient to accomplish necessary tasks, and adequate time to devote to the day-to-day needs of the collaboration effort. A consultant can also serve as a resource for partners and a voice for the Early Childhood community. But, continuity may be affected by the temporary nature of the job.

Whichever option is chosen, experience indicates that a coordinator is essential to ensure a focus of responsibility for planning and follow-through. Many positive outcomes can be associated with the relationship between the coordinator and the collaborative partnership. The experiences of collaborative

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partnerships in Florida indicate that building of connections; development of respect, if not agreement; innovative thinking and solutions to problems; and enhanced community awareness are only some of the positive results of a good partnership.

In Pasco County the partnership was able to use their coordinator to organize a "family-motivated" Community Expo which included a wide range of community services. The Expo served 94 families the first year and has grown each subsequent year.

Simplified System of Entry

"...every agency that works with preschool-age children needs to be involved if you are going to be successful" (St. Lucie County, Florida, 1998).

A simplified system of entry may be as simple as a shared-intake form or as complex as a joint, computerized system. Whether simple or complex, a simplified system of entry enhances other aspects of collaboration. Simplified system of entry opens a door through which families can access all available services and agencies can evaluate all eligible families. Families and service providers can craft a service plan which provides the most effective services. A simplified system of entry also prevents families from experiencing gaps in service by promoting effective tracking of children and encouraging efficient use of agency resources. In addition, it smoothes transitions from existing community programs such as subsidized child care, private child care, Head Start, and Pre-K programs to the public school system and prevents children from "falling through the cracks" in the system because agencies lack communication and awareness of available services.

Charlotte County's partnership involved an early intervention case manager as a liaison between families and service providers. This system proved to be efficient, reducing duplication of services and time wasted in an effort to locate needed services.

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Simplified system of entry depends on a shared understanding of the requirements and services offered by community programs; good communication encourages the development of such a system. Communication develops as collaborative partners share information through meetings, cross-training, and cross-visitation to increase understanding and awareness levels between agencies. In Florida, partnerships have overcome obstacles such as complex bureaucracy, turf issues, and non-standard formatting of intake processes to experience success ranging from community-wide events at which families could access many services in one place to shared computer systems through which community agencies could intake, place, and track families. Because a simplified system of entry allows immediate access to many programs, families can be served by the agency best able to meet an identified need.

Quality

"Don't look at obstacles—why you can't [accomplish things]. Look at what you can do" (Dade County, Florida, 1998).

Quality, as it applies to Early Childhood programs, has been defined in many ways by many people. However, program accreditation, training and credentialling of staff, and developmentally appropriate curriculum are generally agreed upon as defining issues. Quality is a shared responsibility. The collaboration process offers a means for joint efforts to improve the quality of

Palm Beach County developed a central database and a central-intake form which uses standard intake questions across programs to determine need and eligibility. This effort has resulted in a combined waiting list for programs in the county.

Early Childhood programs within a community. By jointly setting high standards using validated information about quality and best practice and working together to plan for implementation of those standards, partners may greatly improve the quality of community programs.

A number of avenues for enhancing quality are open to collaborative effort. Shared resources may be used to encourage NAEYC accreditation. Mentoring efforts can be developed or enhanced. A consultant may be employed to provide technical assistance to programs working toward accreditation. Cross-visitation and information-sharing meetings may be arranged to provide

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support for programs as they work through the accreditation process. Staff credentials and curriculum practices may by upgraded by joint planning to improve the availability and quality of training. Community awareness activities may be undertaken to improve understanding of quality issues in Early

Hernando County used the latest research on best practice to set up a model child-care center. The center serves as a training site and a resource, as well as modeling best practice in developmentally appropriate learning practice and inclusion.

Childhood programs. Collaborative partners can also work together to educate the business community as to how quality issues impact them and to involve the business community in the process of providing quality programs.

In order to address these issues, collaborative partners may need to find ways to overcome turf issues and distrust. The Interagency Council may provide a setting for addressing these issues. In Florida, collaborative partnerships have experienced success in addressing barriers. Efforts to provide mentoring and to make good training readily available to all Early Childhood professionals have been among the most successful efforts of Florida's collaborative partnerships.

Quality is a community issue. A common goal may be to provide quality service to all families regardless of which program they choose. Collaborative partnerships offer an opportunity to reach this goal.

Transition

"Barriers have come down" (Pasco County, Florida, 1998).

Transition means "creating continuity...building bridges for the transitions that young children and their families naturally move through" (Melaville, Blank, & Asayesh, 1993). Successful transition provides a seamless system for families; this is one of the outcomes of successful collaboration. In order to meet the goal of smooth transitions for children, all agencies must value and participate in the transition process. All Early Childhood programs must offer quality services which are family-driven. Partners must develop a system which

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Many partnerships, including Jefferson/Madison and Columbia/ Hamilton/Lafayette, set up mentoring programs for providers as they worked toward accreditation. Some projects also provided "mini-grants" to help cover the cost of NAEYC validation.

encourages free access to shared information and resources, shared leadership, effective communication, and coordinated training efforts. Problems such as lack of transportation, gaps in service, and effective services for all children from birth to age eight may need to be addressed.

Research indicates that joint, ongoing transition planning may make it possible to achieve the goal of addressing all the issues which affect transition (Melaville, Blank, & Asayesh, 1993). Practically speaking, this means that existing programs must identify services already available and recognize gaps in service. All partners must be flexible enough to look at what they offer and how they can change to help build a comprehensive network of services. Through this flexibility, unique solutions to problems can develop. In Florida,

Manatee County's project developed a summer transition project designed to help rising kindergarten students' transitions from preschool to kindergarten. Five sites within the county hosted the program at which students participated in activities intended to familiarize them with developmentally appropriate kindergarten activities. The program included 171 students. Manatee County also published a transition handbook in English and Spanish as a part of their transition program.

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partnerships have experienced success through co-location of programs, coordination of curriculum, and joint meetings of participating agencies. Joint meetings promote understanding and allow for effective coordination of services with each contributing agency. They also promote the attitude that "we are all in this together," which seems to be necessary for successful transition to take place.

St. Lucie County provided field trips for Pre-K children and their parents during April and May. Parents were given registration materials, school brochures, and small gifts for their children. The project also produced transition videos on topics of concern to parents as their children transitioned from day care or preschool and made them available to parents through Blockbuster Video, St. Lucie County School District, and local realty offices.

When agencies join hands, children and families benefit.

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Challenges Faced/ Lessons Learned

Collaboration is by nature a challenging undertaking; every aspect of the grant offers unique challenges, and from each there are lessons to be learned. This section of *Coming Together* identifies some of those lessons which partners have consistently noted over the six years the collaboration grants have been in place.

Project Coordinator

The Project Coordinator, whether a hired consultant or an agency member, has proven to play a key role in the collaborative partnership.

Partnerships identify three areas of concern which may interfere with the effective functioning of the Project Coordinator:

Turf issues such as

- Lack of buy-in to the project because of a personal agenda
- Difficulty in maintaining an impartial perspective

Time issues such as

- Lack of adequate time to devote to the project
- Difficulty in devoting time required for the day-to-day needs of the project

Training issues such as

- Need for sufficient expertise to perform necessary administrative functions such as budgeting and record keeping
- Need for effective planning skills
- Need for a competent, experienced facilitator/mediator

Coordinators are sometimes challenged by the need to identify with the partnership rather than an individual agency. In addition, some coordinators must "wear many hats"; priorities can become a problem. Although partnerships can and do function effectively with a variety of organizational structures, some partnerships indicate that the use of a hired consultant seems to reduce the significance of some of these challenges.

Transition

Effective transition requires maximum commitment from all agencies involved. Concerning transition, issues tend to fall into these categories:

Documentation and tracking issues such as

- Consistent tracking of families between programs
- Inconsistent service documentation

Bureaucracy and turf issues such as

- Difficulty in replacing established forms and procedures with new shared forms and procedures
- Difficulty in sharing the case manager role
- Unwillingness to share information

These challenges may occur not only on the individual level, but also on the agency level. They may be related to a lack of flexibility in agency procedures and regulations. Experience of partnerships in Florida indicate that joint sharing and planning meetings are effective in meeting the challenges posed by transition. Good avenues for communication support effective documentation and tracking. Current electronic interaction, such as that provided through modems, networked systems, or the Internet, also enhances communication.

Quality

Quality is impacted by, and impacts, all other areas of the collaborative partnership. Challenges presented by quality relate to

Monitoring issues such as

- Tracking of CDAs to determine whether certification is maintained
- Tracking of CDAs to measure retention in the Early Childhood field
- Monitoring of NAEYC accredited programs to ensure continuing best practice

Training issues such as

- Providing high-quality training
- Providing accessible training to all Early Childhood professionals
- Funding of training

Quality issues represent a balancing act for parents and professionals. High-quality Early Childhood programs are costly. Statistics indicate that the amount families pay for one year of child care, which is currently approximately

$4,000 (*Kids Count*, 1997), represents about one half of the actual cost of an Early Childhood program. How can we enhance the quality of programs without a negative impact on families?

Collaboratives have experienced success through creative use of grant funds. Resource lending libraries have been developed. Grant funds have been used to enhance access to training through stipends and mini grants. Mentoring and partnering arrangements between programs have developed. Support networks bolster continuing quality.

Simplified System of Entry

Simplified system of entry is a concrete issue. Gains are measurable. Consequently, collaboratives may choose this issue to address early in the grant process. Impediments to producing an effective simplified system of entry include

Turf issues such as

- Resistance to replacing established entry systems

Bureaucratic issues such as

- Difficulty addressing the needs of all programs involved through a consolidated system

Many partnerships have experienced success in developing a simplified system of entry. Experience shows that it is important to identify the needs and resources of all agencies which will use the chosen system. Technology can be used to enhance the entry system, but an effective entry is a product of good communication between agencies.

Evaluation

Evaluation is the process which reflects the success or failure of a project. It may be formative or summative. Projects should include both types of evaluation to ensure the best results. As with any undertaking, collaboration grants must be monitored and evaluated in order to assess and improve the effectiveness of the program.

Successful evaluation begins before the grant is in place with a needs assessment. This provides information which specifies community needs as they relate to the components of the collaboration grant. This data can be used in planning goals and activities for the collaboration project. They can also be an indicator of which data should be gathered.

Data which is collected should address the needs of the community and the goals of the collaboration project. Data can be collected in a variety of ways,

from pre-tests and interviews to focus groups and town meetings. It is important that the data collected be measurable and specific. Numbers, dates, and names must be included. For instance, it is less effective to state that an apparent increase in quality is supported by an increased number of NAEYC-accredited centers than it is to maintain that an increase in quality is clear because four additional programs have become accredited in the community.

Gains credited to collaboration should also be verified through measurable data. Again, it is less effective to say that collaborative partners assisted programs to become accredited through technical assistance than it is to say that collaborative partners provided 50 hours of technical assistance through mentoring visits to programs as they completed their self-study. Data can be collected both at regular intervals during the collaboration process to show ongoing progress and at the end of the process to document the final result. It may prove to be desirable to hire an outside evaluator who is impartial and experienced in working with data.

Concerns relating to the evaluation of the collaboration grant process center around two sets of issues.

Planning issues such as

- Including an evaluation plan in the initial grant

Method issues such as

- Who will evaluate the collaborative grant process?
- How will the evaluation be conducted?

Formal evaluation is not one of the eight required components of the collaboration grant, and, initially, it was not included in the collaboration grants as they were written. However, many Florida partnerships now indicate a need for a formal evaluation process as a part of their grant planning. Florida is working toward evaluating the progress of collaboration. Currently, evaluation is often based on annual reports gathered from throughout the state.

In spite of the challenges inherent in collaboration, good collaborative systems can and do develop and, in many cases, result in innovative problem-solving. The most successful collaborative efforts have evaluated the needs of their communities and expanded existing resources and funding streams. In addition, successful collaboration efforts rely heavily on careful planning and consistent communication such as that motivated by cross-trainings and shared meetings.

Collaborative partnerships often become an Early Childhood resource within their community. Many partnerships in Florida have been able to meet the

challenges presented by collaboration and have developed working collaborative systems. Collaboration is effective and has become an inherent part of the system where it has been used. "At first, there was some distrust, (but) as we offered (programs), they began to say, 'This is to the benefit of all our children'" (St. Lucie County, Florida, 1998).

Collaboration in action—partners work toward a common goal.

Conclusion

Collaboration works! This is validated by the comments of those involved with the collaborative grant process, from those concerned with initiating the grants and overseeing the grant process to those most affected by the collaboration grants: Early Childhood professionals and parents. The following is an interview with Allan Stonecipher, the Co-Director of the Governor's Commission on Education. Mr. Stonecipher is a strong supporter of collaboration and the collaborative partnership system.

Mr. Stonecipher, would you give us your view on why collaboration is important?

I have come to believe that we need a holistic perspective on programs for children zero to five rather than viewing our programs as "silos" where each program is separate and isolated. Anything increasing collaboration will serve kids better. All programs that serve children should be connected so that no child falls through the cracks.

How do you think the collaboration grant system has affected collaboration in Florida?

We have gotten good reports on the grants as seed money. The Governor's Commission has taken that approach, that is, incentives to encourage new and continuing efforts. We are proposing new planning and block grant money to be used in very much the same way. The state has gotten a lot for 3 million a year—that's money well spent.

As Co-Director of the Governor's Commission on Education, you have done important work that affects children and education in Florida. How do you feel collaboration fits in with your work?

Policy needs a more comprehensive view of early childhood and education. We would like a policy group at the state level which might be called the "Children's First Governing Board." This group would meet quarterly to set policies and goals. If it's nobody's job or everybody's job, it doesn't get done. We need leadership. Then we would like more incentives for local coalitions like the collaborative partnerships which would include all groups serving children.

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What do you see as the future of collaboration and the collaboration grant process in Florida?

I assume the concept will continue—I hope existing grants will continue. Good progress has been made. The brain research has helped synthesize it. There is a good outlook that after the session we will have made an advance in Early Childhood policy.

Is there anything else you would like to add about collaboration for those who will read this?

The future of education is tending toward collaboration, integration, a holistic approach. State programs have developed over decades, a piece at a time, through "add-ons." As needs are evaluated, the conclusion is that the better systems work together, the better off children will be. How fast people move and work things at the local level is important in moving this forward.

Coming Together illustrates how collaboration has proved to be an effective tool for change and outlines how one state has adapted the collaboration process to improve resources for children and families. It is hoped that the document will serve as a useful resource for those interested in collaboration as they initiate the collaboration process in their own communities.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD

Coming Together

Collaboration as a Tool for Change

Based on the experiences of SERVE's collaborative partnerships in Florida, *Coming Together* is intended as a technical assistance document for those interested in the collaboration process—observers, researchers, supporters, or implementers—and those looking to better understand collaboration. *Coming Together* is helpful in providing readers with lessons learned through hard work and dedication.

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